

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Saturday Oct. 7, 1939.

(For Broadcast Use Only)

Subject: "CAMPFIRE MEALS." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

If you like meals cooked over an open fire, October is the month to indulge. Summer weather is often too hot for outdoor cooking. And winter is too cold and damp for all but the hardiest picnickers. But October's bright cool days call for campfires and the food that goes with them. So now is the time to invite your family and friends outdoors to dinner.

Campfire cookery is so simple and primitive that you may find it a little difficult at first, especially if you're used to a modern civilized kitchen. You may be an expert at fancy ten-course dinners at home, yet find yourself helpless and awkward at cooking steak and potatoes over a camp fire. But watch an old woodsman turn out food to make your mouth water with no equipment but a jack-knife and frying pan. He'll tell you that the secret of open-fire cookery is, first, the right kind of fire; second, just a few utensils convenient for campfire use; and third, a few simple hearty foods that will cook quickly and easily over the fire.

First, about the fire. The ideal cooking fire is a small bed of deep glowing coals. A large flaming blaze burns your hands, smokes your face, and blackens your food. If a number of people are going to cook at your picnic, better build several small fires than try to crowd them all around a big fire. Use dry seasoned wood and light the fire at least half an hour before you want to start cooking. Let the fire burn down to coals, replenishing it now and then until you have a deep pile of red embers.

So much for the fire. Now about your utensils. If you have an outdoor fire-

1871-1872

1871

1872

1873

1874-1875

1876-1877

1878-1879

1880-1881

1882-1883

1884-1885

1886-1887

1888

1889

1890

1891

1892

1893

1894

1895

1896

1897

1898

1899

1900

place with a grate built in, you won't have to bother about bringing a grate from home. If not, better give the grate first place on your equipment list. It will hold the pots and pans steady over the fire while you are busy at other jobs. You can buy a regular camp grate with folding wire legs to plant firmly in the ground. Or you can borrow the grate from the oven of your kitchen stove.

Next to the grate a most helpful utensil is a long-handled broiler. With a long-handled broiler you won't need to worry about burned hands when you cook meat or fish over the coals.

Of course, you'll also need a coffee pot -- maybe two, if the children drink cocoa. And you'll want one good-sized covered kettle that can endure smoke and flame. Be sure the handles of your kettles and pans are not soldered on, for a hot picnic fire can melt solder. You'll also want a long-handled frying pan and a long-handled fork and spoon. Even with all these long handles, you'll save your fingers if you also have a pair of tongs to pick up hot things, and some cotton or asbestos gloves. To complete your equipment, you'll want a small sharp paring knife, a long bread knife and a little board to do your cutting on. Of course, if you become a professional at outdoor meals, you may also use a reflecting oven and a frying kettle for French fried potatoes, and a lot of other items. But these are extras, not necessities, for a good camp meal.

And that brings up the subject of food. A good camp meal concentrates on a few simple hearty foods that cook quickly and easily over a camp fire. That means mostly food that will fry, or broil over the coals, or boil in a kettle of water.

A good many people maintain that no food on earth compares with steak cooked over a campfire. Here's how to prepare this treat. Ask the butcher to cut steak no thicker than an inch and a half. Then cut it in strips of convenient size for handling in the broiler or holding in a roll or sandwich. You don't have to buy the most expensive steak. Round steak is good if you pound it first to make it tender. To give it extra flavor and tenderness, let it stand before cooking in a mixture of

(10/7/39)

salad oil, vinegar, salt and pepper. When you cook the steak, sear it first on both sides by holding it close to the coals. Then cook it more slowly until it is just done to your taste. An especially good way to fix steak is to put a layer of bacon strips on the broiler, then the steak, and then a layer of onion slices. Cook until the steak and onions are done. The bacon may turn black, but its flavor will linger in the steak. You can cook chopped beef or hamburgers much as you do steak. Or you can cook hamburgers in the frying pan. When they are done, pour a can of vegetable soup over them to make "campfire stew."

Another inexpensive meat dish is kabobs. Each picnicker cooks his own. For kabobs have ready long thin pointed sticks or strong pieces of wire. As if you were stringing beads, put on first an inch-cube of salt pork or a small piece of bacon, then an inch-square of lean meat, then a slice of onion, and so on. (The meat may be veal or lamb kidney, or lean beef or lamb.) Hold your kabobs over the coals and broil just a few minutes.

Another campfire treat is potatoes roasted in ashes. You'll have to light your fire about an hour and a half in advance for roasting potatoes, but the results are worth it. Bury the potatoes deep in the hot ashes and then build your fire above them and continue cooking the rest of the meal. Every now and then try the potatoes with a long fork to see if they are getting tender in the center. They'll come out with a thick hard ashy crust but the inside will be white and mealy, delicious with butter, salt and pepper.

Well, there, I'm only started telling you about good camp dishes and my time is up. But don't forget that October is the ideal month for cooking outdoors.

#####

